



## Edinburgh Fringe Festival - Special Edition 2009

### Song Jiang Battle Array, Taiwan

WORLD PREMIERE

MEADOWBANK SPORTS CENTRE, 139 - 143 London Road, Edinburgh

Date & Time: August 7-13 at 14.00 £3/£1; August 7-9 at 18.00 £3/£1; August 8-13 at 11.00am £3/£1

Reviewed by Jacqueline Sharp

My expectations of Song Jiang Battle Array were well fulfilled. The Song Jiang Battle Array troupe's magical martial arts display was mind blowing. The troupe performed in every inch of the green grass platform within a large tent. Their pounding, jumping, and fast martial arts movements and dance, was masterful. , as they enacted several battle array scenes, to the sound of drums, accompanied with flags.

I loved the colourful bright costumes, face paint and armour, as they enacted several battle array scenes, to the sound of drums, accompanied with flags. This was all true to the origins of a 200 year old legend, way back to Ming Dynasty

era in China.

The young students of Shih Chien University, Kaohsiung Campus, entertain the audience to the maximum. Their skills, concentration, strength and capabilities in this fast-moving riot of colour and sound are outstanding. These youngsters really did give it their all and had the enthusiastic audience begging for more. Their wonderful, innovative, interesting, and exciting, eye catching, colourful, amusing performance is a joy to see. It's not to be missed.

They deserve an Edinburgh Fringe 2009 award for excellence!

#### *EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW - Jacqueline Sharp in Conversation with Paul Blewcham, , International Marketing Manager, The Song Jiang squad*

Q Who are The Song Jiang Squad and what are they promoting?

A The troupe is students, who attend The Department of Tourism Management, at Shin Chien University, Neimen Township, Kaohsiung County, Taiwan. The troupe was formed in March 2004, under the

leadership of Guo-Jau-He, Master of Arts.

We are performing at two locations within the United Kingdom.

At Edinburgh Fringe in August 2009, dates and times above.

Then at Gerrard Street in China Town, London, on the 18th August, the performance will begin at 2.00pm.

We are promoting the cultural diversity outside Taiwan, to International arena, where people outside of Taiwan can get an insight into our history of

martial arts, physical theatre, drumming and dance, hence us promoting our cultures of Nei Men.

Our troupe also promotes the benefits of martial arts combined with dance, which are that it is good for health.

Q What is your relationship with the Squad?

A Firstly, I am British, and teach English, at the Shin Chien University.

Laughing, he says, "how the cards have turned", as he used to teach Chinese back in

England.

**Q** In your own words, how best would you describe The Song Jiang Squad ensemble?

**A** They are an ensemble of 48 members, most of which are girls. As professional artists, they perform Taiwanese martial arts, opera, physical theatre, drumming and dance, portraying the spirit of a traditional battle scene.

The troupe aims are to reinterpret and enhance performing arts in creative ways.

The legendary story character, Song Jiang, from two hundred years ago, describes The Legend of Water Margin (Sui Hu Zhuan), which describes the military arrays which were formed, in that era of time, where the troops consisted of 36 Tian-gang star gods and 72 Di-sha star gods, totalling 108 people, described in the Song Jiang Battle Array.

As I said today, the ensemble is much reduced to 48 members, fitting to social changes of Taiwan.

**Q** Explain to me where the idea for the performance originated from? Please describe if The Song Jiang Battle Array is an historical event, true story, or fiction?

**A** The story of Song Jiang Battle Array is based on historical legends, from over two hundred years ago. One legend is that in Song Dynasty, people often dressed up as generals, runners, inferior officers, or other different officers and soldiers holding swords, spears or cudgels and performing in dramas or traditional operas.

Others believe that during the Nei Ming dynasty, the Song Jiang Battle Array in Taiwan was used by Cheng Chung-Kung's military, to prepare troops to defend coastal areas of Taiwan, protect inner public security against outer invasion. They were also trained to use martial arts, to fight against Qing Dynasty.

**Q** So what is the connection with the troupe from Neimen village and the Song Jiang Battle of Array legend, are there any local connections?

**A** Yes, the students are connected to the Kaohsiung County, as they are all students at Shih Chien University, which is based in the Neimen Township, with a population of less than 30,000.

Neimen Township of Kaohsiung County has a strong connection with the Song Jiang Battle of Array, as described in Song Jiang Battle Array legends.

Legend is that martial arts were brought to Kaohsiung County, Taiwan, when Cheng Cheng-Kung, prepared his Fujian troops for battle, to defend the coastal areas of Taiwan, during the Ming period. However, this has not been officially documented.

After his death, Cheng Cheng-kung, is seen as a god, who is worshiped by the people, they saw him as a hero, a courageous warrior. During the Ming Dynasty, he was protecting the territory, for the people, to prevent invasion from the Quing Dynasty, who eventually did take over.

This is where the Song Jiang Battle Arrays, martial arts originate from, the Cheng-Cheng-kung, and explains the connection with Kaohsiung County, which today, has at least 15 Song Jiang Battle Array groups.

The townsfolk, in Neimen, have a temple, a place of worship, known as Nanhai Zizhu Temple. There are temple committees, who are dedicated to keep alive the traditions of Song Jiang and they are active in encouraging their culture, to be promoted to the International arena.

This is why the Song Jiang Battle Arrays, martial arts originated from Cheng-Cheng-kung.

**Q** You have explained that martial arts was a tradition two

hundred years ago, during the Ming Dynasty, Cheng-Cheng-kung era, so do you think that this modern ensemble have captured this, have they brought their own interpretation to events?

**A** The troupe has reinterpreted traditional martial arts of Kaohsiung County; they have made small changes, such as reducing the array from legendary tradition, of 108, to modern array of 48. Wen-Shiang Ju, and Wen-Jen Liu, both get the credit for being Martial Art Supervisors, for the performance. Ya-Ting Chang, Choreographer, Su-Ling Chou, Dance Supervisor.

Hsia-Ling Hsia, Music Producer, incorporated modern music, and Chi-Shiung Wang, Music Producer, kept the Traditional Song Jiang, to the performance.

Other than that, producer Ching-Tang Chang and Art Director, Mei-Ling Hsiao, have kept with 200 year traditions, of dance, drums, physical theatre, opera, where Song Jiang Battle Array scenes, involved armour and wearing of military costumes.

**Q** Could you please explain more about the costumes, they were beautiful, very bright, colourful and interesting, who made them and what do they represent?

**A** The fashion designer, Mei-Yin Lin designed the costumes, Shu-Hsin Lo, was the Pattern Supervisor.

**Q** Please explain the multi bright colours of the costumes, and painted faces, what do they represent?

**A** The painted faces, bright earth and nature colours, to match costumes, are our idea, modern idea.

The costumes represent nature and the Chinese Yin and Yang, where nature has four seasons and five elements. In our production we pray to the gods of wind, flame, thunder and electricity to save the civilians'

lives.

Fire, sound, wind, thunder and light, are represented in our costumes. Red representing wind; yellow for light; Black for Yin (Moon), White for Yang (Sun);

These colours are elements of nature, natural powers, which come from our Gods. These Gods are part of the Song Jiang Battle Array, they protect our people.

We also have dragons in our production, as in our culture the dragon is a God, which we worship. The dragon looks after the people of the village, to protect them and for prosperity.

Q You also have flags in your production, please explain what they are?

A Flags are used in battle to destroy and keep away evil spirits; they also confuse enemies in battle, by their rapid movements

One of our flags represents the Yin and Yang, Taoism, the symbol in the flag is known as the Taijitu.

The Taijitu, symbol, which originates from China 4,000 years ago, associated with Chinese medicine, for restoring body balance. The symbol represents the entire celestial phenomenon, which contains cycle of sun, and four seasons.

The Taijitu is a large circle, known as a "divided circle", one half Yang, (white/light), other half Yin, (black/dark). Taijitu is symbolic for male/female, and dark/light.

There is a smaller circle within Yin, representing the Winter Solstice and smaller circles within Yang, representing Summer Solstice.

On outer circle on parameter of the Taijitu, represents "everything". The inside, two half's represent, the two energies, they cannot exist without each other.

Our other flag represents Shih Chien University.

We have another flag representing the colours from the four elements of nature, red, green, yellow and white.

Q Are you going on tour, with Song Jiang Battle Array, as an ensemble troupe?

A As already mentioned we are going to China Town, Gerrard Street, London, on 18th, at 2.00pm.

If anyone is interested in us touring, performing, they can contact us by email at [fion@mail.kh.usc.edu.tw](mailto:fion@mail.kh.usc.edu.tw) or <http://admin.kh.usc.edu.tw>

Q Who sponsored you to come to Edinburgh Fringe 2009?

A We are very grateful to our Sponsor Wei-Wu-Ying Center for the Arts, very grateful for the Support from Council for Cultural Affairs, Taiwan, Kaohsiung County Government Taiwan and College of Culture and Creativity, Shih Chien University, Kaohsiung Campus.

Q The Song Jiang Battle Array,

have won awards and renowned acclaim for their performance, would you like to explain what these are?

A Yes, I would be delighted to!

On 1st January 2003, the Song Jiang Battle Array of Neimen won the "International Trophy" in the Rose Parade, which was held in Pasadena, California, U.S.A.

They have received 1st, 2nd, 3rd, place awards in previous years of Taiwanese folk culture competitions among the universities in Taiwan.

Participated in the 2006 Aloha Festival performances on invitation of the Honolulu City Council member Rod Tan, and was honoured with the President Award.

Performed in the 2008 presidential inauguration celebration party of Taiwan.

Invited to perform in the opening ceremony of the 2009 World Games in Kaohsiung.

Q Lastly, in a few words, how would you sum up your troupe's aims?

A Their aims, with Song Jiang Battle Array, are to reinterpret and enhance Taiwanese performing arts in creative ways.

Q Lastly, I would like to thank you for your wonderful performance, at Edinburgh Fringe 2009, your ensemble is awesome, such a credit to your country, Taiwan, well done and thank you for coming to the United Kingdom.

A It is an honour and we are delighted to have this opportunity to visit Edinburgh and London in 2009, thank you!

## Alternative Green

A radical magazine, campaigning for localization, ecology and English identity  
Copies available from Alternative Green, **P.O. Box 52838, London SW11 1ZU**  
Price £3 per copy

*Also available*  
Back issues of Alternative Green  
Early issues of Green Anarchist  
£2.50 per copy

**To End Poverty,  
The Starvation of the Periphery by the Core**  
by Richard Hunt  
(hard back)  
£10 including p&p

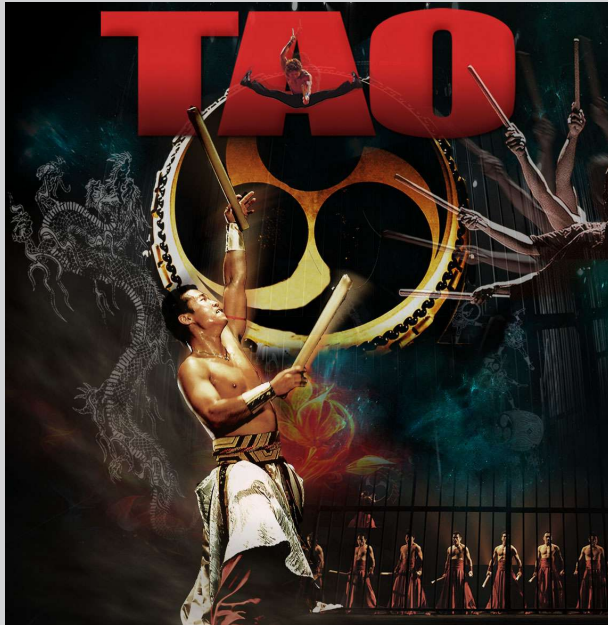


# SAMURAI MAGICAL DRUMMING

6th to 31st August 2009 at 18.25pm,  
Assembly & Assembly Hall

WORLD PREMIERE

Reviewed by Jacqueline Sharp



As the music hall fills the excitement is evident. One by one the audience fills up, people of all ages, nationalities, countries. I was particularly pleased to see several people appear in wheelchairs, eagerly waiting with anticipation for the TAO drummers to appear.

Like a flash of lightning they appear on stage, with their ensemble of drums, such a breathtaking sight to see!

On stage they look good in their eye-catching well-made grey and black coloured costumes.

The stream of Taiko drumming was awesome and genius! Such gifted individuals, giving joy to an eager audience, in a small part of Edinburgh, was totally mind blowing. Their ensembles ranged from multi-drum, multi-player; multi-drum, one player; one drum-multi player; one drum, one player.

Their range of Taiko drums, filled the whole room, even the audience anticipation for every pound of the Bachi sticks was magical. The atmosphere was totally charged, a truly spiritual, unique, imaginative experience, that I shall remember forever.

I recommend this performance have five stars, lots of gold stars from me, it truly deserves of an Edinburgh Fringe 2009 award. A must see, not to be missed performance!

## EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

Jacqueline Sharp in  
Conversation with Emma  
Sato, International Marketing  
Manager, TAO Samurai  
Magical Drumming, TAO  
Entertainment Co Ltd

[www.drum-tao.com](http://www.drum-tao.com)

WORLD PREMIERE - TAO SAMURAI  
MAGICAL DRUMMING

Edinburgh Fringe 6th to 31st August  
2009, at 18.25pm, Assembly &  
Assembly Hall

Q How long have TAO as  
an ensemble been together?

A This has changed over  
the years, as we add to the  
ensemble with fresh talent all the  
time, as we have two groups at  
TAO. We have two drummers who  
have been with us since the  
beginning.

Q So how do you recruit  
new members to TAO?

A We regularly hold  
auditions, however the auditions  
are very hard to pass, usually out  
of one hundred applicants, and it  
is likely that only four to five will  
pass to the next level, which is first  
stage of our training. Even then,  
some students may or may not move  
on in their training. We test  
drummers for strength, endurance,  
fitness, drumming is not just about  
drumming; concentration is a huge  
part of what we do.

Q You said you have two  
groups with TAO, explain to me  
who the other group are.

A The second group is  
known as TAO Yellow, they are our  
younger students, who reside at  
our base, home ground in  
Akakabuto, which is based at the  
Kuju Highlands, which is on Japan's  
main island of Kyusnu. The area is  
very beautiful, spiritual, peaceful,  
surrounded by mountains and  
beautiful nature.

Q Do both groups TAO and  
TAO Yellow both live at the home

ground then?

A Yes, our home ground, has three different sized training halls, a studio, newly built open air theatre to accommodate 2,000 people, spa, sauna, gym, accommodation for students, literature room, library. We all live there when not touring.

Q Do you have any plans to extend your home ground facilities?

A Yes, we are hoping to expand and build a premium hotel, to accommodate one hundred guests.

Q Do you hope to expand into the music business?

A Yes, next year we hope to launch our own record label, our current album is for sale at our shows. If you want to hear more about our music, you can check out our website [www.drum-tao.com](http://www.drum-tao.com), or got to,

Djmusicjac celebrates Japanese Taiko Drums - Vol 1

[http://www.youtube.com/view\\_play\\_list?p=21D451F830659BEA](http://www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=21D451F830659BEA)

Q You mentioned the tough auditions and first level of training for students, what would be a typical day for them at the home ground?

A They get up at 5.00am and have to run 10km; this is to help with stamina, strength. Physical endurance is an important part of a professional drummer's life. They get drum training, where they have to drum for one hour every day; this helps with their concentration, another huge part of a professional drummer's life.

Q You mentioned that some drummers may struggle at first part of the training what do you mean by that?

A Each drummer is different; we understand that, which is why we realise individually they will have

different capabilities, skills and personality. We know this, which is and that is why some progress to higher levels, others take their own time to progress. We fit our shows to suit each of their skills and personality.

=0 A

Even when touring is finished, the drummers still have to keep up with their training, which never stops.

Q How long does the training take before a drummer goes out on tour, with either of the TAO groups?

A As I already said, this depends on each individual, case by case, from training to touring this may be three months to five years.

Q So what would you say makes a good drummer then?

A Laughs, amusingly! A good drummer must have good physical stamina, fitness, concentration. We are not a dance troupe, so dance may be part of what we do and useful to us if they have these skills. However, dance and theatre is less important for us as we are professional artists, drumming ensemble.

Q Are you going on tour then?

A Yes, you can find all about our European Tour from our website, [www.drum-tao.com](http://www.drum-tao.com). We are visiting Germany, Switzerland, Austria.

Q Where did you buy your Taiko drums then?

A From Asano Daiko, Japan, <http://www.asano.jp/en/products/index.html>

Q Are the drums expensive?

A Laughs! The Odaiko drums cost £150,000 USA Dollars, enough to buy a house. We have purchased ten of them; we have

brought two with us at this year's Edinburgh Fringe TAO Samurai Magical Drumming tour.

Q What are the Taiko drums and musical instruments in your shows?

A Odaiko drums, are the largest drums, we have two with us on our current tour. Nagadou Daiko, middle sized drums; Okedou Daiko, drums carried or placed on stand; Shime Daiko, which are small white drums. A Shinobue is a Japanese transverse flute which has a high-pitched sound, which is played in ensembles=2 or as a solo instrument. Koto, a Japanese stringed musical instrument derived from the Chinese guzheng. The Koto is the national instrument of Japan. Chappa/Chanchiki symbols. Narimono, small handheld percussion instruments, large Japanese Gong.

Q Do you intend to run TAO Workshops either from your home ground, or anywhere else?

A At the moment no, as we are touring as Professional Artists. We may consider our second group, TAO Yellow, be involved in Workshops, as they are based at our home ground, but this is something which may be in development.

Q What would your dream achievement be for TAO?

A To have TAO perform on Broadway, this has always been our ultimate dream.

Q Have you got any other plans for TAO in the pipeline?

A I have already said we hope to launch our own record label next year, we are also considering setting up a Foundation. Any Foundation, Workshops, from our home ground will have to fit in with our ideology of spiritual being, nature, fitness, and of course drumming, as this is what we are all about.

Q Your show at this year's Edinburgh Fringe 2009 is called TAO Samurai Magical Drumming, explain to me what element of Samurai belongs to the show?

A Samurai are well known for their strength, endurance and concentration, we follow same.

Q Have there been any film offers in the pipeline?

A Not any recently, we are open to suggestions and offers. We have been on Fuji Television in Japan several times. Fuji Television organise our shows.

Q Lastly, I would like to congratulate you on a tremendous performance at Edinburgh Fringe 2009, the audience was packed and they were clapping, cheering and gave you several standing ovations, how do you feel about that?

A Thank you, we are pleased and we are proud and excited to have already toured 16 Countries to date, since our first visit to Edinburgh Fringe in 2004, as an ensemble. We also performed at Edinburgh Fringe in 2005. To date, we have pulled in audiences of 3.6 million overall.

Q What would be your final quote?

A Our ambition is to conquer and tour the World!

## Fahrenheit 451

ExADUS Theatre Company

The Vault, venue 29, Merchant Street

In Ray Bradbury's stark future kerosene is perfume. Housing is now fireproof so firemen have a new job protecting society from books. They don't put fires out. They burn books and sometimes the people who insist on reading them. Only one truth is worth knowing; fire and smoke.

Bradbury's nightmare vision of the future reads too much like the outcome of present trends for comfort. Here, people who read books are regarded as far too uppity. Society has fragmented into 300 different minorities each jealous of their rights. Feminists don't like Jane Austen's books. Burn them! Blacks don't like Little Black Sambo. Whites don't like Uncle Tom's Cabin. Burn them! Burn books WE don't like. "Burn the smart ones. Shun the damn bright know-it-alls. They know too much."

Society promotes ignorance as the path to social harmony, equality and uniformity. In the words of Fire Chief Beatty we are not only born equal, we will be, "damn well crushed down and made equal."

In the everyday mad rush of modern life people had no time to read; so books were shortened, condensed, simplified. TV on the other hand was instant and gave no time for reflection. It tells you what to think before you have time to let it sink in. Viewers immersed themselves in soaps personalised for themselves. All debate and discussion was replaced by meaningless banter about sports scores.

The ExADUS players gave a polished performance. James Munter stands out as Montag, the disillusioned fireman who kept a book he ought to have burned and began to read it stands out. Keir Watson brought a nice touch of menace and cynicism to the role of Chief Beatty. Fahrenheit 451 is not a laugh a minute. It's a serious, disturbing play that ought to sound the alarm bell to all thoughtful people about trends in modern Western society.

\*\*\*\*



### NEED SOME PUBLICITY?

Accentuate is a public relations company that exists to promote campaigning non-profit making organisations. You might be a Community or Pressure Group ignored by the media and struggling to get heard, drowned out by the noise of established organisations.

We can help!

Accentuate is already a consultant to the Solidarity Trade Union and would be interested to hear from you and your group. Contact us on [accentuatepr@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:accentuatepr@yahoo.co.uk)  
[www.accentuate.org](http://www.accentuate.org)



# Camille O'Sullivan: the Dark Angel

Assembly @ The Assembly Hall

August 6th-31st £16.00

Reviewed by David Kerr

Not long after the Carrick Biz raved about Camille O'Sullivan last year she found a host of new fans with a stunning TV appearance on Later with Jules Holland. Ireland's sexiest and sassiest songstress has returned in triumph to the Edinburgh Fringe. Each night she packs the Assembly Hall to the rafters with eager fans and a few curious newcomers.

Camille is no little-girl-lost; overwhelmed by the crowds, the lights and the huge stage. Despite her tiny size her powerful presence dominates the hall. Her impressive voice rises from a whisper to a full-throated roar as she belts out her favourite David Bowie and Nick Cave songs. This year she has added a powerful version of Hurt to her repertoire. It's not quite so moving as Johnny Cash's memorable swansong but it has its own strengths.

Camille O'Sullivan's Dark Angel runs until August 31st before going on tour. Catch it if you can.

\*\*\*\*\* Five Stars

[www.camilleosullivan.com](http://www.camilleosullivan.com)



THE BRITISH WORKERS' UNION

- Oppose globalisation
- Oppose offshoring of British Jobs
- Oppose non-unionised cheap labour
- Support British workers

[www.solidaritytradeunion.org](http://www.solidaritytradeunion.org)

Solidarity Trades Union,  
P O Box 93, Spennymoor, DL16 9AN

# Auld Sangs and New Rhymes

Leitheatre Players

St Serf's Hall, Clark Road

The 250th anniversary of Robert Burns's birth has led to a few reappraisals of Burns the man, Burns the poet and the significance of his work today. Most Scots are justifiably proud of their national bard. This anniversary year has been promoted by the Scottish government as the year of the homecoming where Scots and their descendants overseas are encouraged to 'return' to Scotland on holiday.

Burns was a colourful character with an eye for the lassies. This comes out well in John Archer's Auld Sangs and New Rhymes, a hugely entertaining celebration of his life brought to the stage by the Leitheatre company. This fast-moving story is performed in rapid-fire Scots as we see Burns juggling his complicated love life with his poetry, his farming and his duties as an Exciseman. The action moves around Scotland from his birthplace in Alloway through high society in Edinburgh and his death in Dumfries.

Changes of scene were choreographed smoothly with a minimum of props. The action took place in the centre of the packed hall with the audience arranged on all four sides. At times members of the audience joined with gusto in the singing of the auld sangs. This is a performance with staying power. It deserves to go on tour.

\*\*\*\*\*



First published in 1992 Counter Culture was conceived as part of a 'War of Position' against capitalism. It represents a vibrant alternative view of popular culture through reviews, debate and commentary. This anthology is an introduction to a radical new way of looking at our world.

Articles, interviews and reviews on films, DVDs, books, music, art, the Edinburgh Festival (and Fringe), culture and society and more! An eclectic, stimulating and thought provoking mix.

Paperback: 196 pages Publisher: BCD (11 Aug 2006) Language English ISBN: 1847281184 Available from [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)

# 14 Seconds: Welcome to the Police State... by Stealth

The Space, Royal College of Surgeons

Random Cactus

Last year Peter Yates, the writer of 14 Seconds, was arrested and assaulted by police at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. His offence? Failing to give his name. He was charged with six separate offences including resisting arrest. His case against the police continues.

This unpleasant run-in with the police opened his eyes to the nature of policing in the UK today. Are our police the trusted guardians of law and order they were seen as forty years ago? This play suggests that they are not.

Yates takes the rise out of modern policing with

the names of his characters: PC Macuffim, WPC McStitchup, DCC Ahlframyer and Chief Constable Longerarm. Don't expect subtle criticism. Yates' unfair treatment at the hands of the police has made him into a fierce critic.

14 Seconds exposes with savage humour the techniques used by the police to humiliate members of the public singled out for special attention. It reveals their obvious contempt for the general public they are supposed to serve and protect. Many coppers are not interested in upholding the law impartially. They have become hooked on power. They've become just another street gang: a scary street gang with truncheons, guns and tasers. When brought to book, they use the PCB defence; Prevarication, Confusion and Deflection.

14 Seconds is a wake-up call for those who think that the police are there for them. Go see this if you don't want to find out the truth the hard way.

---

## Losing Susan

World premiere

The Spaces

@ Royal College of Surgeons

Z Theatre Company

August 9th -20th 2009 £15.50

SUSAN is the mother of three lovely girls. One of them is sensible while the other two quarrel over a pair of 'lucky knickers'. Things though are not quite right with Susan. She seems to be distracted; as if tormented by unseen dancing demons. She forgets things. How many sugars does her husband take in his tea? Where did I put the ironing board?

When her husband or daughters draw attention

to this she lashes out at them in frustration and anger. Sometimes though she seems to be her old self; laughing and chatting with the girls about a funny incident in the High Street with a neighbour.

As they swap funny stories, Susan tells the same story again and later begins to tell it a third time. Everyone exchanges glances. Something has gone very wrong with Susan.

This is the background to this intensely moving story of a loving mum who unravels in the midst of her bewildered and helpless husband and daughters. Losing Susan brings home the effects of Alzheimer's on Susan and her family. A scene in which Susan goes missing draws out this sense of loss. They find their mum but have to admit that she is lost to them. This frightened, confused woman has gradually replaced the mum they knew and loved. Powerful stuff!

\*\*\*\*\*



# Mercy Madonna of Malawi

The World, St George's West

Reviewed by David Kerr

Remember the media fuss a few months ago when the musician Madonna went over to Malawi in southern Africa to adopt (or was that buy?) another orphan? She succeeded in adopting a four-year-old girl called Mercy in spite of local laws prohibiting adoption to anyone not resident in the country for at least two years. As is often the case, Madonna got her way and split the country down the middle in its reaction.

Mercy Madonna of Malawi takes a wry look at this incident. The cast is entirely Malawian. Even Madonna is played by a large black man dressed in a black skirt, pointy bra and unfeasibly large sunglasses. The dialogue is unforced and natural, never missing a beat in exploiting the comic potential in the story; even looking forward 18 years into the future when Mercy might become the 'black Paris Hilton of Scotland'. The songs are a nice mix of traditional African harmonies and skits on Madonna songs: \* I am a Malawian girl and I'm living in a Malawian world...\*

The world-famous superstar is unlikely to appreciate this show but the audiences went wild for it. See it quickly before the lawyers close it down.

FRINGE REVIEW

## BAL MASQUE

By Jacqueline Sharp

Universal Arts at St Georges West

6th to 17th August 2009, at 21.30pm,  
(1 hour 20 mins)

As soon as I saw Alexandra Bowa, I knew instantly there was something special about her singing voice. Every beat of her vocals was amazing as she took to the stage wearing a red Victorian dress to sing tracks from a role she played in her cabaret show The Duchess.

Sam sings beautifully, particularly in her track Watch Out. The quirky sound of her vocals echoing on the background music merging with her vocals on stage was perfect. This had a modern, funky, cool sound. She could make the pop charts with this track, as it was so special.

She had another side of her character, as a goddess of alien culture. She came onto the stage in futuristic outfits, handmade by herself, I thought that she was an interesting character. These tracks from her cabaret show Galaxy, Third Eye and Zombie were could actually easily enter the music charts as International hits.

Anyone who comes to Bal Masque will discover one of the most talented singer-songwriters of this century with a fantastic high to mid vocal range. She reminds me of Kate Bush - better even. After hearing her track Zombie, I am convinced that Alexandra Bowa (aka Sam Chara) is going to be a huge international pop star.

In Bal Masque the two male accompanists should take a passive role. Their singing was for another show of their own. Certainly the men can play piano and flute for her. The real star was Sam. She deserves the right to take centre stage.

This show deserves acclaim, as one of best cabaret acts this year, by far. Fringeers will love it.

FRINGE REVIEW

## Scottish Folk Roots and Offshoots

David Ferrard

The Royal Oak, Infirmary Street, Edinburgh

Reviewed by David Kerr

David Ferrard is an amiable young Scottish-American folksinger and songwriter with a disarmingly laidback conversational style. He chats to his audience in the intimate surroundings of the downstairs lounge bar of the Royal Oak in Edinburgh. This approach works its magic and he

soon persuades the initially reluctant paying public to join in the chorus of some of the better known songs plus one of his own compositions.

As 2009 is the 250th anniversary of Robert Burns' birth, it's only natural that any Scots folksinger worth his salt would perform one or two of his songs. Ferrard came up with a few crackers, Green Grow the Rashes O, Parcel o' Rogues, the Slave's Lament and John Anderson, My Jo. As his theme is songs that have crossed the Atlantic ocean he sang a magnificently moving version of Stephen Foster's Hard Times with the audience doing their bit to pump up the volume on the chorus.

This talented singer accompanies himself on an acoustic guitar, occasionally using it as an impromptu drum. He has a fine melodic voice which holds up well in the Appalachian a Capella ballad Pretty Sarah.

David Ferrard has a website on [www.davidferrard.com](http://www.davidferrard.com)

[www.myspace.com/davidferrard](http://www.myspace.com/davidferrard)

\*\*\*\* four stars

#### FRINGE REVIEW

## Sequins and Shpiel: an evening with New York's Rachael Sage

CITY EDINBURGH 1a Market Street Venue 90

August 7th -11th 20:00 £8.00

Reviewed by David Kerr

What's going on, here? I wondered as the lights went down and a young man took the stage to sing a haunting unaccompanied song. I thought I was coming to see Rachael Sage. Then it clicked, this was the warm-up man. Dismiss any ideas you might have of somebody who isn't that great filling in until the main act comes on stage. Seth Glier is an exceptionally talented 20-year-old pianist and singer-songwriter with a huge vocal range that could be a cross between Brian Kennedy and Billy Joel. Whether singing a Capella or accompanying himself on a keyboard he brought passion and fervour to his music. Songs about

growing up in a large house surrounded by love play alongside a song on the pitfalls of fame. Seth Glier is going to go far.

After this impressive introduction I wondered how the main act would top that. Rachael Cave moved through the audience distributing feather boas, shawls and scarves among us. This glamorous chanteuse sparkled as she took to the stage in a long blue sequinned dress to join a cellist and a drummer who had already begun to get the audience in a receptive mood. What a singer! Sweet melodies followed by yearning songs of pain and loss. I was particularly impressed by her version of the Fame song, I Want to Live Forever.

That was the sequins sorted out but we got plenty of entertaining shpiel in between the songs. Rachael is comfortable with her New York Yiddish background. She has some cracking stories to tell in a variety of accents. Audience participation is a great part of her act. At one point, kazoos were given out to allow everyone to join in the chorus of one of her songs. This interaction means that no two shows are exactly the same.

Find out more about Rachael Sage on [www.rachael.sage.com](http://www.rachael.sage.com) or [www.myspace.com/rachaelsage](http://www.myspace.com/rachaelsage)

and Seth Glier on [www.mpressrecords.com](http://www.mpressrecords.com)

#### FRINGE REVIEW

## Up and Over It! An Irish Dance Spectacular

Puck Productions

C Venue, Chambers Street

August 5th-31st £9.50 - £11.50

Reviewed by David Kerr

Irish dancing got a shot in the arm a decade or so ago with the Riverdance phenomenon pioneered by Michael Flatley but now it's got stuck in a rut. This is clear when two award-winning dancers Suzanne Cleary and Peter Harding take to the

stage gagged and tied up in straitjackets. They dance a few sets before breaking out of their straitjackets and launching into a freer and much more athletic dance.

This is the start of a new departure for Irish dancing. It strikes a blow against the over-elaborate costumes, the fake tans and the hugely expensive ringletted wigs that curse the current scene. This fantastic, frenetic duo had the audience lapping up their new interpretations of the Irish dance style.

The audience loved one scene in particular: an argument between the two dancers conducted through table drumming and dance steps. Incomparable!

#### FRINGE REVIEW

## A Mind's Journey in search of destiny

Anwesha Company

C Venue, Chambers Street, Edinburgh

August 5th-3rd 2009 £9.50- £11.50

Reviewed by David Kerr

According to a pleasant Indian man in the Royal Mile who invited The Carrick Biz along, this was the must-see highlight of the Fringe: a multimedia fusion of Indian and modern dance with wonderful music and drums. Sounds great. Sounds interesting. Don't be deceived. It's neither.

An attractive young Indian girl takes to the stage. As she dances she wails about how confused she is. The action then switched to a projection screen showing another Indian dancer in traditional costume travelling and performing on the London Underground. By this time the original girl was not the only one in the room to feel confused. Two other dancers who had been lying flat on the stage came to life. One of these was pictured on the back screen going up and downstairs. After

what seemed like four hours of torture we finally came out of the theatre where one perplexed punter was heard to ask 'What on earth was that?'

This reviewer had two regrets: firstly I didn't take a seat nearer the door so that I could end my pain sooner; secondly I turned down an invitation to a Scottish celidh evening in St Gile's Kirk to see this baffling stuff.

[www.anwesha.net](http://www.anwesha.net)

\* One Star

*From Black Cat Distribution*

### Goodnight Girlie

Girlie, (Eveline Allen) was the eldest daughter of a Baptist Minister who grew up in a peaceful Northamptonshire village, before the First World War. She writes of her earliest memories, of the people and events that shaped and influenced her formative years.

Her memories evoke a simple, innocent and carefree era, where the Chapel was the centre of her family life. The First World War was to change all that, and was to have devastating effects on many of the villagers, including Girlie's own family.

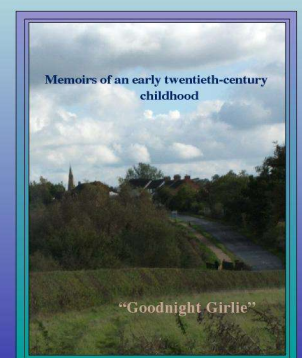
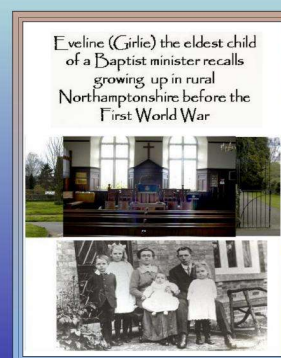
The story continues through the hardship of the post-war Depression, which saw Girlie move from her rural existence, to work in the family leather factory in the industrial Black Country and later Manchester.

This is the autobiography of an ordinary girl, whose spirit, humour and love for her family remained undiminished throughout the twists and turns of her extraordinary life.

The book also includes extracts from her sister Edith's diaries, and Second World War memories by her son Tom.

(Edited by Tim Bragg)

Available from Amazon & all good bookshops from March 2008



Eveline Allen



## Celtic Caledonia - the Curse

Siamsoir Celtic Dance Company

C venue, Chambers Street, Edinburgh

August 7th-15th £7.50 - £9.50

Reviewed by David Kerr

After a bitter experience with another dance presentation the previous evening, your reviewer was a bit apprehensive about seeing this fusion of Irish, Scottish and modern dance styles. This time, however, the experience was positive.

This production delves back into the mists of legend when the Gaels left Erin for the land of Caledonia in search of lost magic where they came into conflict with the Picts already living there. This story recounts in dance how the two peoples were reconciled and came together to form the united kingdom of Alba (Scotland).

There was no confusion as to what was going on in this production as the music and the dancing was tailored to fit the mood. The whole gamut of human emotions and their consequences were on display: hatred and war, love, joy, excitement, sadness, fear and menace. The choreography was flawlessly executed. This must have been difficult as in some of the scenes a great number of dancers - Picts and Gaels in conflict - were on stage at the same time.

## The Gospel of Luke

Bruce Kuhn

The Lot Venue 34  
Grassmarket, Edinburgh

August 13, 14, 17th & 18th

Reviewed by David Kerr

BRUCE Kuhn jokes that this one-man show is cheap to stage. No props are required and the Authorised King James Bible is out of copyright. All he has to do is memorise word-for-word the life of Jesus as told by Luke and deliver it to his audience.

That seems like a tall order. It's hard enough at times to read a short passage of scripture with any fluency or coherence. Kuhn, though has no such problems. He pulls it off superbly. He opens in the conversational style of a letter from Luke to his old friend Theophilus. But Kuhn's delivery doesn't stay conversational for long as he unearths the depths of emotion in Christ's life as told by Luke. He reminds us that the characters in Luke's Gospel were flesh and blood people like us. They were upset, confused and angry at times just like us. They weren't a special breed of super-holy other-worldly person.

Take Joseph and Mary's frantic worry over the loss of their twelve-year-old son on a visit to



### the Politbureau

The Politbureau stocks a wide variety of political literature: magazines, pamphlets, posters, leaflets etc. Items from the British National Party, National Front, Socialist Workers Party, Third Way, Anti Nazi League and many more. Many items are rare and hard to find.

stores. ebay. co. uk/thepolitbureau

### Online Europop at Soundclick

Jacqueline Sharp, film critic  
for Counter Culture invites you to listen to  
her online radio station at  
<http://members.soundclick.com/musicjac>

DJ musicjac specialises in  
European High Energy Europop,  
Euro Dance and Euro Electronica.

Jerusalem. The relief mixed with exasperation experienced by Mary when she found her boy debating with rabbis in the temple is something with which every parent can identify. Like most youngsters of his age, the young Jesus just wondered what all the fuss was about.

Kuhn holds the listener's attention effortlessly. This fresh take on an old story is well worth hearing. It's also available on DVD but as Kuhn modestly said, the DVD is not as good as the book.

\*\*\*\*

## FRINGE REVIEW

By Jacqueline Sharp

### LAND without WORDS

by Dea Loher,

Translated by David Tushingham

UK PREMIERE

5th - 30th August 2009

Caves 2 - 12.20pm (50 mins)

I was drawn to see Land Without Words, by Dea Loher, Award winning writer, and even more intrigued by the quote from Land without Words, "war doesn't happen in a picture what you experience that's what counts there's nothing else to understand".

For me, Land without Words, I could relate to each individual's personal experiences of how they feel about the war in Afghanistan. "No matter what side of the war one comes from, there are the same feelings of anger, frustration, fear, trauma, hopelessness, worthlessness, pointlessness, empathy, sympathy, and so the list goes on".

The director Lydia Ziemke clearly understood the writer's feelings. Land without Words was a masterpiece of work, expressed extremely well through the eyes of a fictional character, a

painter/sculptor performed by actress Lucy Ellinson in this one woman show.

I enjoyed watching the journey, where the painter/sculptor, seeks to find a deeper meaning to life, purpose of life, value and validity of such, all through the eyes of an artist. Lucy Ellinson is an extremely gifted actress. Credit must be given to Dea Loher, who already has an outstanding list of Awards; Bertolt Brecht-Literature Prize 2006; Heiner-Muller-Professorship 2009 Berlin Award of Literature

Lydia Ziemke has pulled it off with Land without Words! She is likely to become famous as she has great insight and leadership as a director. She has previously worked as assistant director at the Royal Court Theatre in London, where she also helped to run a small West End Theatre.

Her team have pulled off one of the most outstanding pieces of performance theatre at this year at Edinburgh Fringe. This awesome play is not to be missed, Land without Words deserves an Edinburgh Fringe 2009 Award!

## FRINGE REVIEW

### Tell It Like It Is - Songs of Guns, Doves and Bloody Roads

Barb Jungr

Queen's Hall, Clerk Street, Edinburgh

reviewed by David Kerr

To hear Barb Jungr speak in her easy, chatty, across-the-garden-fence manner you would never



[civilliberty.org.uk](http://civilliberty.org.uk)

suspect that she has such a powerful, haunting singing voice. Her message is simple, the world is in shit and it's getting shittier by the day, Her songs railed against the futility and tragedy of war. She was ably aided by two talented female instrumentalists: Jenny Carr on piano and Jessica Lauren on a Korg keyboard and a variety of other instruments.

The old standards from Jacques Brel, Bruce Springsteen, Eric Bogle and of course Bob Dylan were there but there were one or two surprises too. Did you know that Last Train to Clarksville was an antiwar song? Me neither. It's about a conscript heading off to fight in Vietnam. That's why the singer doesn't know if he'll be coming back. Who'd have thought it? The Monkees as antiwar protesters.

Despite the largely gloomy and pessimistic nature of the material there was a hopeful note in her magnificent upbeat rendering of Peace Train.

This passionate lady had the audience eating out of her hand with her mixture of powerful songs and chatty introductions to each piece. We could have sat there all night and not noticed the time passing. Quite a few were so impressed that they queued up afterwards to buy CDs.

\*\*\*\* four stars

## FRINGE REVIEW

# Chronicles of Long Kesh

Green Shoot Productions

Assembly at Rainy Hall

August 13th - 30th £13.00

Reviewed by David Kerr

The Chronicles of Long Kesh is the story of the infamous internment camp and prison as seen

through the eyes of Prison Officer Freddie Gillespie.

Martin Lynch has bought his special comedic touch to this often grim story. Despite the humour he manages to avoid the pitfalls that could so easily trivialise it.

Chronicles outlines the personal stories of three IRA and two UVF prisoners as they each moved in and out of the prison over the space of more than two decades. This is an honest play with a surprising amount of music in it. Derry Provo Oscar loves Motown songs. Hank, the UVF commander, favours Bob Dylan. Had the Troubles not broken out, Hank would have ended up as a hippy in San Francisco. You'll also find a spirited rendition of The Sash.

This was no propaganda piece for the paramilitary organisations. Lynch does not attempt to gloss over these organisations' own acts of violence. What the play does chronicle was the dreadful toll it placed on everyone in the prison - inmates and screws alike - and how they tried to cope with it all. Lynch's script is laced with strong black humour.

The six actors played a dizzying multiplicity of roles. It's a wonder they didn't get confused as to who exactly they were supposed to be! Chronicles is not one of those quiet plays where you can nod off in a corner and miss little. There was no fear of that in this gripping tale.

Audience reaction was hugely positive. The packed crowd gave the plays a long and well-deserved standing ovation; a fairly uncommon event in the Edinburgh Fringe. Black Ulster humour seems to travel well.

Chronicles of Long Kesh has already toured in Northern Ireland but it's sure to get a repeat showing sometime soon. It's bound to become a modern classic so look out for it in the papers if you can't make it to Edinburgh this month.

\*\*\*\*\* This is a five star production.